

## Sacred Anchoring in the Cyber-Public Sphere: The Functional Shift of Quranic Authority in Indonesian Digital Ecological Narratives

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### Abstract

In the digital public sphere, sacred texts have evolved from static ethical references into active instruments of policy critique. This article examines the concept of “sacred anchoring” within Indonesian digital ecological narratives, focusing on how Republika.co.id recontextualizes Qur’anic verses to address environmental crises. Utilizing framing analysis on articles published between 2025 and 2026, the study explores the integration of empirical data with scriptural citations. The findings reveal that digital journalism has emerged as an autonomous hermeneutic authority, transforming the Qur’an into a tool for “spiritual auditing.” Through strategic framing, the media constructs a “theological technocracy” that subordinates scientific facts to religious interpretation. Consequently, the effectiveness of environmental messaging in Indonesia is increasingly driven by curated sacrality rather than technical accuracy. This study contributes to the mediatization of sacred text by demonstrating how digital platforms restructure sacred authority in opposition to secular-capitalist logics.

**Keywords:** *Framing Analysis, News Media, Digital Journalism, Ecology, Religious Authority.*

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## Introduction

The Qur’an no longer merely occupies a sacred space within the mushaf; rather, it has been drawn into the digital information sphere to address the global ecological crisis. This phenomenon signals the fragmentation of religious authority, as journalism now treats sacred verses as “authority property” to legitimize its narratives.<sup>1</sup> This practice undermines traditional exegetical methodology by transforming digital journalism into a site of theological negotiation, where atomistic “extraction of meaning” is performed to

<sup>1</sup> Heidi A. Campbell, *When Religion Meets New Media* (London: Routledge, 2010), 120.



engage with secular, contemporary issues. By integrating empirical data with theological concepts, this process shapes public consciousness: the validity of the ecological crisis is increasingly established not solely through scientific evidence but through the editorial curation of scriptural verses.<sup>2</sup> In doing so, the media assumes the role of a “theological technocracy,” setting new ethical standards in the digital public sphere and transcending its conventional informational function.

Studies on the interaction between religion and media can generally be categorized into three main approaches. The first is the literacy and professionalism approach, which emphasizes journalists’ responsibility to ensure theological accuracy, minimize distortion, and promote public understanding.<sup>3</sup> The second is the mediatization and commodification approach, which examines how media logic exploits religious iconography and sacred symbols for contemporary discourse, often compelling religious institutions to adapt to secular market values.<sup>4</sup> The third is the functional meaning-construction approach, which explores how digital actors reinterpret scriptural texts through cognitive and audiovisual processes for practical or personal legitimation.<sup>5</sup> However, what remains underexplored is how digital text journalism condenses the authority of sacred texts into an instrument of ecological auditing that actively evaluates state policies. This article addresses that gap by conceptualizing news outlets not merely as conveyors of information but as sites of autonomous hermeneutic authority—spaces where the Qur’an is reconstructed into a discursive tool to challenge capitalist logic amid the environmental crisis.

This study analyzes the shift in the Qur’an’s authority and function within digital journalism through three stages. First, it examines the architecture of sacred anchoring on news portals, which redefines crises and integrates sacred texts into the logic of active reporting. Second, it explores the integration of authority, which synchronizing classical interpretive traditions with contemporary journalistic narratives to legitimize critiques of

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<sup>2</sup> Stewart M. Hoover, *Religion in the Media Age* (London: Routledge, 2006), 9.

<sup>3</sup> Debra L. Mason, “Religious Literacy in News,” *Religion & Education* 48, no. 1 (January 2, 2021): 74–88, <https://doi.org/10.1080/15507394.2021.1877522>.

<sup>4</sup> Aistė Vitkūnė-Bajorinienė and Eglė Gabrėnaitė, “Media Representations of Jesus Christ: The Dichotomy between the Sacred and the Profane,” *Verbum* 16 (December 17, 2025): 1–16, <https://doi.org/10.15388/Verb.16.12>.

<sup>5</sup> Eric D. Rackley, “Reading Sacred Texts: A Qualitative Study of Religious Educators’ Literacy Processes,” *Journal of Research on Christian Education* 29, no. 3 (September 1, 2020): 236–58, <https://doi.org/10.1080/10656219.2020.1838366>; Oren Golan and Michele Martini, “Sacred Sites for Global Publics: New Media Strategies for the Re-Enchantment of the Holy Land,” *International Journal of Communication* 14 (September 13, 2020): 24–24.

secular issues. Third, it investigates the epistemological transformation in theological meaning-making, positioning the media as both an agent of sacralization and a producer of “theological technocracy.” Through this framework, the study demonstrates how digitalization has transformed the Qur’an from a static ethical reference into an autonomous moral audit instrument that influences moral policy in the digital public sphere.

This research argues that digital news portals have transcended their traditional role as conveyors of secular information. They now serve as hermeneutic authorities conducting spiritual audits of the global ecological crisis. In this process, the media strategically relocates the Qur’an from the private sphere into the digital public sphere, framing the environmental crisis not simply as a technocratic failure but as a theological deviation.<sup>6</sup> The integration of sacred texts and classical exegesis into news reporting functions not only to enrich narratives but also as an active agent that evaluates industrial and state policies through the lens of transcendental morality. This produces an epistemological shift wherein the media acts as a “mediator of knowledge,” asserting that meaningful solutions to environmental degradation depend on spiritual compliance. The findings confirm the emergence of a new regime of truth, in which the sacred text operates as a discursive weapon against the dominance of secular capitalist logic.

## Method

This study employs a qualitative approach with a case study design to examine the mediatization of sacred texts within the editorial sphere.<sup>7</sup> The unit of analysis comprises news articles addressing the ecological crisis published on the *Republika.co.id* news portal between 2025 and 2026. *Republika Online* was selected due to its sociological significance as a mainstream Indonesian media outlet with a clear ideological affinity toward Muslim audiences. Consequently, its representation of the Qur’an serves as a key variable in shaping digital religious authority. Data were collected through digital documentation and purposive sampling. Specifically, the researcher selected articles that explicitly employ sacred anchoring by integrating Qur’anic verses with empirical data on environmental degradation.

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<sup>6</sup> Robert M. Entman, “Framing: Toward Clarification of a Fractured Paradigm,” *Journal of Communication* 43, no. 4 (December 1, 1993): 51–58, <https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1460-2466.1993.tb01304.x>.

<sup>7</sup> Robert K. Yin, *Case Study Research and Applications: Design and Methods* (Thousand Oaks: Sage Publications, 2018).

Data analysis was conducted using Robert M. Entman's framing model to examine how the Qur'an is recontextualized from a static ethical reference into an active instrument of ecological auditing.<sup>8</sup> This method emphasizes the alignment among Entman's four framing elements—problem definition, causal diagnosis, moral evaluation, and treatment recommendation—and the strategic use of sacred texts as discursive weapons against secular narratives. To enhance the credibility of the findings, the study employs theoretical triangulation by juxtaposing the framing analysis with relevant literature on digital religious authority and classical hermeneutics. This approach elucidates the epistemological shift experienced by the Qur'an within the digital media ecosystem.

### **The Mechanism of Sacred Anchoring: News Portals as Spaces for Redefining Crises**

In the discursive architecture of digital media, framing is no longer merely a strategy for issue selection but a mechanism for constructing reality through a specific ideological lens. The *Republika Online*, particularly through its Iqra channel, employs theological framing by foregrounding sacred elements to interpret secular phenomena such as environmental crises. Within this framework, the media does not simply report disaster-related facts but engages in interpretive analysis by positioning Qur'anic texts as the primary lens for problem definition, causal diagnosis, and moral evaluation.<sup>9</sup> This practice integrates empirical data into Qur'anic categories, elevating the sacred text from a supplementary role to the central interpretive authority over ecological reality.

An analysis of *Republika Online* reveals that the Qur'an is positioned not as a decorative supplement but as the foundational logic of reporting that defines reality itself. News articles consistently anchor environmental events in QS. al-Rūm [30]:41, employing the concept of *al-fasād* to interpret floods in Sumatra and the 2024 deforestation figure of 175,400 hectares.<sup>10</sup> By subordinating empirical data to theological lexicology, the portal reframes floods not primarily through meteorological factors but as material manifestations of "human actions." This approach positions *Republika Online* as an

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<sup>8</sup> Entman, "Framing: Toward Clarification of a Fractured Paradigm."

<sup>9</sup> Entman.

<sup>10</sup> Muhyidin, "Tafsir Surat Ar-Rum Ayat 41 Dan Peringatan Di Balik Banjir [Exegesis of Surah ar-Rum Verse 41 and the Warning Behind Floods]," *Republika Online*, November 28, 2025, <https://iqra.republika.co.id/berita/t6fdad430/tafsir-surat-arrum-ayat-41-dan-peringatan-di-balik-banjir>.

interpretive authority that transforms conventional news reporting into a spiritual warning (*tazkirah*) imbued with moral significance for its Muslim audience.

A similar mechanism appears in the use of *musrifin* (transgressors) from QS. al-Syu'arā' [26]:151–152 to construct a new causal model. Rather than merely describing environmental exploitation, *Republika Online* categorizes such behavior under the concept of “excess” (*isrāf*).<sup>11</sup> By emphasizing the root letters *Sin-Rā-Fā*,<sup>12</sup> the portal shifts responsibility for the crisis from external or systemic factors to the moral character of individuals and actors. This theological framing simplifies the complexity of ecological damage into a clear narrative of non-compliance with divine principles. Consequently, the news portal functions as a discourse regulator, employing sacred texts to establish legitimate versus deviant standards of natural resource consumption within the digital public sphere.

The portal further deconstructs public rhetoric by invoking the theme of hypocrisy found in QS. al-Baqarah [2]:11–12. It contrasts economic actors' claims of “development” and “improvement” with theological judgments of “destruction.”<sup>13</sup> This framing pattern exposes the contradiction between public conservation narratives and actual practices of water pollution and deforestation. Methodologically, *Republika Online* identifies this as “structural hypocrisy,”<sup>14</sup> employing sacred texts to reveal hidden motives behind exploitative policies. In this way, the portal functions as a form of moral censorship, using the Quran to critique the integrity of development actors and transforming information into a powerful instrument of theological critique.

The justification of environmental degradation within *Republika*'s interpretive framework draws on the epistemic characteristics of *al-adabī al-ijtimā'ī* (socio-literary), which have accelerated in the digital age. Sacred texts are no longer treated as static linguistic objects but as dynamic entities required to respond immediately to contemporary challenges. The discourse structure on *Republika Online* reflects a shift in

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<sup>11</sup> Fuji Eka Permana, “Mengenali Kaum Musrifin Dalam Alquran, Mereka Yang Merusak Bumi [Identifying the Extravagant in the Qur'an],” *Republika Online*, December 3, 2025, <https://iqra.republika.co.id/berita/t6oizt483/mengenali-kaum-musrifin-dalam-alquran-mereka-yang-merusak-bumi-part2>.

<sup>12</sup> Permana.

<sup>13</sup> Fuji Eka Permana, “Kemunafikan Dan Akar Kerusakan Ekologis Yang Kian Parah [Hypocrisy and the Roots of Worsening Ecological Destruction],” *Republika Online*, November 28, 2025, <https://iqra.republika.co.id/berita/t6fcvt483/kemunafikan-dan-akar-kerusakan-ekologis-yang-kian-parah-part3>.

<sup>14</sup> Permana.

interpretive authority—from “text-centered” approaches to “context-centered” needs. This modern hermeneutical orientation prioritizes the pragmatic-functional dimensions of Qur’anic verses in adjudicating social reality.<sup>15</sup> Thematically, this approach exemplifies selective digital thematic exegesis. Journalism acts as a hermeneutic agent that performs atomistic “meaning extraction,” selecting verses relevant to ecological issues without adhering to a rigid analytical (*tahlili*) framework. In doing so, it transforms the Qur’an into a guide for practical ethics that legitimizes environmental advocacy.<sup>16</sup>

Epistemologically, the transformation of the Qur’anic text on *Republika Online*—from static sacred literature to an active logic of reporting—signals the emergence of a new regime of truth in digital spaces. Journalism functions as a knowledge broker that reauthorizes sacred meanings. The deployment of theological terms such as *al-fasād*, *isrāf*, and hypocrisy to frame deforestation data represents more than mere communicative simplification; it constitutes an epistemological shift that subordinates scientific-objective facts to religious-subjective interpretation. In this context, the media transcends its traditional role as an information disseminator to become a contemporary interpretive institution practicing textual reasoning amid the ecological crisis. Truth about environmental disasters is no longer validated primarily through empirical verification but through verses selectively curated by journalistic authority.<sup>17</sup> This process enables an often arbitrary extraction of meaning under the banner of transcendental authority. It demonstrates that digital media now holds significant discursive power to define the boundaries of public ethics and morality through the strategic use of sacred frameworks, while simultaneously blurring the line between the objectivity of news and the subjectivity of interpretation.

### Integration of Authority: Synchronizing Interpretive Traditions within the Framework of Digital Journalism

In digital media, framing functions not only as a strategy for issue selection but also as a mechanism for constructing reality through a distinct ideological lens. *Republika Online*

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<sup>15</sup> M. Qurash Shihab, *Membumikan Al-Qur’an: Fungsi Dan Peran Wahyu Dalam Kehidupan Masyarakat* [Grounding the Quran: The Function and Role of Revelation in Society] (Bandung: Mizan, 1992), 75–76.

<sup>16</sup> Sahiron Syamsuddin, *Hermeneutika Dan Pengembangan Ulumul Qur’an (Edisi Revisi Dan Perluasan)* [Hermeneutics and the Development of Ulumul Qur’an (Revised and Expanded Edition)] (Yogyakarta: Pesantren Nawesea Press, 2017), 115.

<sup>17</sup> Heidi Campbell, “How Religious Communities Negotiate New Media Religiously,” in *Digital Religion, Social Media and Culture: Perspectives, Practices and Futures*, ed. Pauline Hope Cheong et al. (New York: Peter Lang, 2012).

employs theological framing by emphasizing the sacred dimensions of the Qur'an to interpret secular issues such as environmental crises. Rather than merely reporting disaster-related facts, the portal engages in interpretive analysis by positioning Qur'anic texts as the primary framework for problem definition, causal diagnosis, and moral evaluation.<sup>18</sup> This approach integrates empirical data into Qur'anic categories, elevating the sacred text from a supplementary element to the central interpretive authority over ecological reality.

The *Republika Online* portal functions as a knowledge broker, integrating classical exegetical authority into the rapid circulation of digital information. It mobilizes the interpretations of scholars such as Ibn Kaṣīr, al-Qurṭubī, and Raṣyīd Riḍā not as static quotations but as dynamic evaluative tools to critique modern industrial policies.<sup>19</sup> The portal aligns these scholars' concepts—such as the “diminishing of blessings”—with contemporary issues like land degradation and water crises in Indonesia. Through this authority-sharing mechanism, *Republika Online* legitimizes its critiques by grounding them in established theological consensus. In doing so, it reformulates classical exegesis to ensure its relevance in addressing secular challenges such as environmental pollution and corporate land acquisition.

This integration is further demonstrated in the portal's use of institutional references, including *Tafsir Ayat-Ayat Ekologi* (The Interpretation of Ecological Verse) by the Ministry of Religious Affairs (Kemenag RI). *Republika Online* employs the concept of *mā'an ṭahūran* from QS. Al-Furqan [25]:48–49 to reframe water from a mere biological commodity into a sacred element within the divine order (*rubūbiyyah*). Scientific observations regarding acid rain and industrial waste are linked to narratives of “betrayal of divine grace.”<sup>20</sup> In this way, news texts become a space where religious and media authorities converge to shape public behavior toward nature. Qur'anic interpretation is repurposed as a tool for spiritual risk management, framing ecosystem destruction as a sin that demands accountability before God—transcending mere administrative or legal sanctions.

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<sup>18</sup> Entman, “Framing: Toward Clarification of a Fractured Paradigm.”

<sup>19</sup> Permana, “Kemunafikan Dan Akar Kerusakan Ekologis Yang Kian Parah”; Muhyidin, “Tafsir Surat Ar-Rum Ayat 41 Dan Peringatan Di Balik Banjir.”

<sup>20</sup> Fuji Eka Permana, “Tafsir Ekologi: Krisis Air Cermin Kerusakan Spiritual Dan Etika Manusia Kepada Alam [Ecological Exegesis: The Water Crisis Reflecting Spiritual Degradation and Human Environmental Ethics],” *Republika Online*, January 15, 2026, <https://iqra.republika.co.id/berita/t8w7q1430/tafsir-ekologi-krisis-air-cermin-kerusakan-spiritual-dan-etika-manusia-kepada-alam-part2>.

A notable shift is evident in the restructuring of proposed solutions. *Republika Online* replaces purely technocratic recommendations with the paradigm of *muhasabah* (self-reflection), drawn from QS. Fātir [35]:45. The emphasis on Allah’s mercy in delaying punishment is used to encourage “ecological repentance.”<sup>21</sup> The portal posits that the root solution to the environmental crisis lies in restoring the vertical relationship between humanity and the Creator, which is a prerequisite for physical environmental restoration. Environmental management is thus presented as an urgent spiritual obligation, with journalism serving as a moral agent that articulates theological truth. This approach shifts problem-solving authority from the technical realm to the domain of faith, asserting that compliance with divine ecological principles is the only legitimate path to preventing further destruction.

This phenomenon reflects a profound ontological shift in classical exegesis. Interpretations from Ibn Kaşīr to Raşyīd Riḍā transition from individual ascetic guidance to discursive tools targeting modern industrial practices. While traditional exegesis often emphasizes textual-linguistic and eschatological dimensions,<sup>22</sup> *Republika’s* journalism aggressively recontextualizes these concepts—transforming abstract ideas such as “the loss of divine blessing” into measurable sociological variables linked to water crises and land degradation. The emphasis shifts from philology to axiology. Sacred texts move beyond static scholarly transmission into the digital sphere as instruments of spiritual risk management, where environmental pollution is codified as a theological transgression.<sup>23</sup> By deploying the *muhasabah* (self-reflection) paradigm instead of technocratic solutions, the portal advances a form of “contemporary Islamization” of ecological issues. Problem-solving authority is transferred from technocrats to the domain of collective repentance, effectively deconstructing secular logic and re-sacralising nature amid corporate commodification.

Ultimately, this methodological transformation positions journalism not as a neutral, secular institution but as a theological actor engaged religious journalism. Digital media functions here as a “discursive priest” that sanctifies public issues through carefully selected religious frames.<sup>24</sup> Transcendental values no longer occupy the margins of news;

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<sup>21</sup> Muhyidin, “Tafsir Surat Ar-Rum Ayat 41 Dan Peringatan Di Balik Banjir.”

<sup>22</sup> Muḥammad Ḥusayn Al-Dhahabī, *Al-Tafsīr Wa Al-Mufasssīrūn*, vol. 1 (Kairo: Maktabah Wahbah, 2007), 183.

<sup>23</sup> J. J. G. Jansen, *The Interpretation of the Koran in Modern Egypt* (Leiden: E.J. Brill, 1974), 75.

<sup>24</sup> Stewart M. Hoover, *Religion in the News: Faith and Journalism in American Public Discourse* (London: SAGE Publications, 1998), 207.

instead, they become the moral compass guiding reporting.<sup>25</sup> The integration of classical exegesis into environmental journalism on *Republika Online* thus serves as a site of negotiation, reviving religious authority to challenge secular-liberal discourse. Journalism transforms into a form of intellectual worship—an “information liturgy”—in which every ecological crisis report functions as a moral summons demanding eschatological accountability from its audience.

Through this synergy of authorities, digital journalism enacts an “epistemology of guardianship.” Sacred texts transform from passive objects into active agents that judge deviations from reality. By reframing the environmental crisis as a betrayal of the primordial covenant between humanity and the Creator, *Republika Online* advances a radical de-secularization of public discourse. This process re-mythologizes nature, restoring the sacred character of ecosystems long diminished by capitalist logic to mere exploitable commodities.<sup>26</sup> Classical exegesis thus serves as a powerful shield of authority, cloaking advocacy journalism in absolute theological truth to challenge dominant industrial narratives.

### Epistemological Transformation: The Dominance of News Portals in the Constructing of Theological Meaning

The relocation of interpretive authority from traditional religious institutions to digital newsrooms marks a significant shift, wherein journalism no longer merely disseminates information but actively shapes public understanding of truth. Within Robert Entman’s framing framework, media outlets exercise discursive power by selectively deploying authoritative religious texts that align with their editorial agendas.<sup>27</sup> By assuming the interpretive role traditionally reserved for religious scholars and academia, news portals drive an epistemological transformation that enables journalists to rapidly extract meanings from Qur’anic verses and apply immediate moral judgments to secular realities.

In the *Republika Online*, this transformation is evident in its assumption of interpretive authority traditionally held by conventional religious institutions. The portal draws on the opinions of scholars such as al-Zamakhsyarī and Abū Ḥayyān to analyze layers

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<sup>25</sup> Mary Catherine Kennedy, “Christianity and the Mass Media,” in *The Handbook on Religion and Communication*, ed. Yoel Cohen and Paul A. Soukup (West Sussex: Wiley, 2023), 69–82.

<sup>26</sup> Seyyed Hossein Nasr, *Man and Nature: The Spiritual Crisis of Modern Man* (London: Unwin Paperbacks, 1990), 120.

<sup>27</sup> Entman, “Framing: Toward Clarification of a Fractured Paradigm.”

of internal and external corruption among those responsible for environmental destruction. It constructs framing models that enable journalists to derive targeted meanings from verses, particularly to critique “hypocrisy” in modern industry.<sup>28</sup> This process grants the media the power to instantly determine which verses are relevant to issues such as deforestation or water pollution. As a result, news portals have become active producers of new truths, processing Qur’anic texts through media logic to generate moral judgments that shape public perception of environmental policies.

The framing model employed by *Republika Online* generates meanings that, although inherently subjective, are presented with the apparent objectivity of sacred texts. For example, Hadiths narrated by al-Bukhārī and Muslim regarding the signs of hypocrisy are used to label development actors perceived as betraying their ecological responsibilities.<sup>29</sup> Environmental crises involving water and forests no longer require complex scientific explanations; instead, they are validated through theological categories curated by the media. This interpretive approach cultivates audience awareness that failing to protect nature constitutes a betrayal of humanity’s covenant with God. Consequently, journalism demonstrates its capacity to reshape societal ethical systems by strategically deploying a sacredness framework tailored to the urgency of the global ecological crisis.

Recent coverage further illustrates how *Republika Online* treats the Qur’an as an autonomously managed “authority asset” to establish new ethical standards. By integrating data on net forest loss (175,400 hectares) with Qur’anic norms, the portal engineers a shift in how the public understanding of environmental disasters. The truth about the ecological crisis is no longer derived primarily from technical data but from journalist-curated validation of sacred verses.<sup>30</sup> This strategy positions the portal as a legitimate knowledge broker, guiding its audience toward an ecological civilization. In doing so, the media claims the role of determining what is sacred and profane in humanity’s stewardship of the earth, making theological compliance the central parameter for safeguarding future generations.

This development represents a significant shift in interpretive authority. In classical Qur’anic studies, such authority belonged to the *‘ulamā’ al-rāsikhūn* (scholars of profound knowledge) who adhered to strict methodological conditions (*syurūt al-mufasssir*),

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<sup>28</sup> Permana, “Kemunafikan Dan Akar Kerusakan Ekologis Yang Kian Parah.”

<sup>29</sup> Permana.

<sup>30</sup> Muhyidin, “Tafsir Surat Ar-Rum Ayat 41 Dan Peringatan Di Balik Banjir”; Permana, “Tafsir Ekologi: Krisis Air Cermin Kerusakan Spiritual Dan Etika Manusia Kepada Alam.”

including mastery of auxiliary sciences, *asbāb al-nuzūl* (circumstances of revelation), and contextual analysis to avoid *tafsīr bi al-ra'yī* (interpretation based solely on personal opinion).<sup>31</sup> In contrast, *Republika Online* exemplifies a “forced democratization” and fragmentation of authority, where journalists act as new mujtahids performing instant *istinbāṭ* (legal deduction) on issues such as deforestation and water crises. Consequently, the sacred text is thus transformed from an object of hierarchical scholarly transmission into a flexible commodity of authority serving media narratives. This shift risks weakening the traditional *sand* (chain of transmission) in favour of media functionality that prioritizes practical-political utility over theological depth.<sup>32</sup>

Ultimately, this usurpation of authority positions the media not as a neutral channel but as an active agent of sacralization that defines moral boundaries within the public sphere. Digital journalism functions as a “socio-political priest,” mediating between sacred texts and profane reality to shape collective consciousness.<sup>33</sup> Religious authority has evolved from an institutional-static form into a relational-dynamic one, now residing with journalists who control the religious framing of the ecological crisis. By treating Qur’anic verses as “authority property,” the media creates a form of public religion in which religious discourse is repurposed through journalistic logic to generate moral legitimacy that often supersedes scientific data. In this sense, the media does not merely report on religion—it effectively becomes religion by restructuring value systems and demanding theological compliance for the salvation of the Earth.

The emergence of news portals as producers of theological meaning signals the rise of a theological technocracy in digital journalism. In this context, the validity of the ecological crisis depends less on laboratory validation and more on the editorial curation of sacred texts. By juxtaposing empirical data—such as deforestation statistics—with eschatological warnings, journalism conducts a spiritual audit of state and industrial practices.<sup>34</sup> This creates a new regime of truth, in which compliance with the divine

<sup>31</sup> Jalāl al-Dīn Al-Suyūṭī, *Al-Itqān Fi 'Ulūm Al-Qur'an*, vol. 4 (Beirut: al-Hay'ah al-Miṣriyah al-'Ammah li al-Kitāb, 1974), 200.

<sup>32</sup> Muḥammad bin Abd Allah Al-Zarkasyī, *Al-Burhān Fi 'Ulūm Al-Qur'an*, vol. 2 (Beirut: Dār Iḥyā' al-Kutub al-'Arabiyah, 1957), 154.

<sup>33</sup> David Miller, “Propaganda and The Terror Threat in the UK,” in *Muslims and The News Media*, ed. Elizabeth Poole and John E. Richardson (New York: I.B. Tauris, 2006), 47.

<sup>34</sup> Samira Rajabi, “Media Portrayals of Religion and the Secular Sacred: Representation and Change,” *European Journal of Communication* 30, no. 2 (April 9, 2015): 230–33, <https://doi.org/10.1177/0267323114568001b>; Nabil Echchaibi et al., “Third Spaces, Religion and Spirituality in the Digital Age,” *AoIR Selected Papers of Internet Research*, 2013.

ecosystem becomes the ultimate criterion for future salvation. In the digital realm, the effectiveness of environmental messaging increasingly hinges on the authority of sacred authority rather than on technical precision alone.

This study addresses a critical gap in the existing literature by conceptualizing digital journalism as a dynamic arena for theological negotiation. While previous framing studies have primarily focused primarily on political conflict<sup>35</sup> or actor representation<sup>36</sup>, the present analysis reveals a deeper functional recontextualization of the Qur'an—from a static ethical reference to an autonomous instrument of moral audit. Digitization has not merely transferred sacred texts onto screens; it has fundamentally restructured interpretive authority, shifting it from a clerical, hierarchical model to one characterized by dynamic theological advocacy. These findings affirm the media's emergence as a "theological technocracy" that establishes new ethical standards within the digital public sphere.

In conclusion, the epistemological transformation observed on the *Republika Online* confirms that the digital space has generated a new regime of truth. Traditional religious authority is increasingly subordinated to the logic of digital journalism. The methodological boundaries of classical exegesis have dissolved, replaced by journalists acting as mujtahids who reauthorize sacred meanings.<sup>37</sup> By treating the Qur'an as proprietary authority to establish ecological ethics, digital media has evolved beyond an information medium into an institution that autonomously shapes public morality and conducts spiritual audits of secular reality. The future of religious discourse in the digital public sphere will likely be shaped less by traditional scholarly chains (*sand*) and more by journalism's ability to integrate sacred texts into urgent humanitarian and ecological challenges.

## Conclusion

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<sup>35</sup> Siti Aisyah, "Analisis Framing Robert n. Entman Dalam Pemberitaan Konflik Palestina-Israel Pada Media Online Kompas.Com Edisi 7-9 Oktober 2023 [Robert N. Entman's Framing Analysis of the Palestine-Israel Conflict Coverage on Kompas.com October 7-9, 2023 Edition]," *Jurnal Al-Hikmah: Jurnal Dakwah* 18, no. 1 (August 14, 2024): 69–76, <https://doi.org/10.24260/JHJD.V18I1.3063>.

<sup>36</sup> Adinda Afifah Damayanti, Dadang Rahmat Hidayat, and Siti Karlinah, "Media Dan Bahasa: Analisis Framing Entman Terhadap Prabowo–Gibran Dalam The Straits Times [Media and Language: Entman's Framing Analysis of Prabowo-Gibran in the Straits Times]," *Aksara* 37, no. 2 (December 15, 2025): 365–81, <https://doi.org/10.29255/AKSARA.V37I2.4897.365-381>.

<sup>37</sup> Peter Horsfield, *From Jesus to the Internet: A History of Christianity and Media* (London: Routledge, 2015), 281.

This study finds that the involvement of news media—long regarded as a vehicle for secular messaging—has fundamentally transformed the function of the Qur'an. Once primarily a static, ethical sacred text, it has been repositioned as an active variable within the logic of news reporting. Digital news portals have integrated the Qur'an as a practical evaluative tool for assessing the integrity of industrial policies and environmental governance. Through the mechanism of sacred anchoring, these portals have successfully recontextualized ecological verses as an alternative standard of truth. In this new framework, the legitimacy of environmental crises no longer rests solely on technical-scientific data but is increasingly established through the strategic curation of sacred texts that reintroduce a transcendent dimension amid global commodification.

The framing analysis demonstrates how the Qur'an's functionality has been deliberately engineered to reshape public consciousness. By selectively deploying sacred texts, digital journalism guides audiences toward faith-based moral judgments. This study reveals a significant shift in the role of the Qur'an—from a source of personal inspiration to a powerful advocacy tool that influences moral policy directions in the public sphere. However, this research is limited to a textual analysis of a single news portal (*Republika.co.id*) and does not examine how audiences receive, interpret, or negotiate these mediated sacred texts across diverse social contexts. Future studies should therefore incorporate audience reception research and cross-platform comparisons to provide a more comprehensive understanding of the evolving role of the Qur'an within the contemporary digital media ecosystem.

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**Data Availability Statement:**

The authors ensure that the datasets necessary to replicate the conclusions of this work are presented in their entirety within the article [and/or] its supplementary information.

**Disclosure Statement:**

The author(s) declare no conflict of interest. The research was conducted independently of any commercial or financial relationships with the media organizations or platforms analysed in this study.

### Ethical Approval:

Ethical approval was not required for this study as it relies entirely on the analysis of digital content that is within the public domain. Data was collected solely from public accounts on *republika.co.id* with unrestricted public access. The data collection process adhered to the platform's Terms of Service and API guidelines. To further ensure ethical standards and protect user privacy, any potentially identifiable information, such as user handles and specific metadata, has been anonymized in the final reporting.

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